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STATINTL

Fulbright's Fanaticism



REALLY, it sometimes seems Sen. William Fulbright is becoming more than flesh and blood can bear. His lectures at John Hopkins University wandered all over the lot, but seemed to arrive at the conclusion that the United States' role in Viet Nam is not only unjustified legally and morally, but is to be understood historically as one of those spasms of aimless military exuberance which are characteristic of great nations overgrown in the arrogance of power.

The Senator cited other civilizations similarly addicted, in an effort at historical analogy which left students of history mystified by the strained connections; indeed, mystified at what is beginning to look like personal mania.

Senator Fulbright appears not to be able to think about anything else than Viet Nam, and his statements concerning it are like a fanatic's growing stronger and stronger, more and more disorderly.

At his final lecture he sputtered that "both literally and figuratively, Saigon has become an American brothel." Most of the criticism he has received for that statement zeroes in on the literal applicability of the word.

But it is the figurative applicability that is most astounding. The Senator appears to be saying that Saigon is engaging in a great act of immorality in order to give pleasure to the United States of America. In order to justify this metaphor, it becomes necessary to assert the proposition that Saigon, as headquarters of the movement to resist the Viet Cong, is acting immorally and to assert the proposition that the United States enjoys sending its soldiers there to be killed, and its dollars there to be spent by the billions.

Anyone who seriously believes that it is immoral to resist the communist terrorists, or that the United States is such a power as enjoys such hideous experiences as this one in Viet Nam, or the other in Korea, has lost his hold on reason.

We must hope, reaching for charitable alternatives, that Senator Fulbright lost his hold on the language and used the term "figuratively" more or less because he was boating about for an adverb to walk about with "literally."

Which brings us to the embarrassing contemplation of the Senator's influence as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Barry Goldwater suggested last week that the Senator ought to resign the post on grounds that his position as chairman gives an inflated importance to his pronouncements. I disagree with Senator Goldwater. Unwelcome tho Sen. Fulbright's eccentricity is at this point in history when we need — precisely because our engagement in Viet Nam is more like a visit to Gethsemani than to Sodom — to steel ourselves to the necessity of duty, it is healthy to hear a voice in the legislature criticize the Chief Executive.

The satellization of Congress by the President of the United States is a long term danger which Senator Goldwater has frequently remarked, and we need only to consider in order to force ourselves to endure Sen. Fulbright that in the future the situation might very well be reversed; might be as it was in the novel by Allen Drury, "Advise and Consent," where the President is the appeaser, and the principal Senator in the Foreign Relations Committee, the exercised patriot. Far better, as I say, to tighten our belts, and offer up Senator Fulbright's daily appearances in the newspaper as a small sacrifice in behalf of our boys at the brothel.

It is strange to consider that, but for the accident of Senator Fulbright's origin, he might have been serving us as Secretary of State. It is generally accepted that when elected President, John Kennedy first considered Fulbright for Secretary of State, but was warned away from him on the grounds of his consistent record of opposition to civil rights for Negroes — It is most vividly recalled that Senator Fulbright refused to criticize Gov. Orval Faubus when the governor closed down the schools in Little Rock in 1957, and became the principal badman of recent American History. Otherwise, Sen. Fulbright would have become Secretary of State. In which event it would have been quite appropriate for Senator Goldwater to call for his dismissal, assuming it has not already been effected by the President.

Under the circumstance, there is no alternative to co-existence. Tho at least we are free, as individual citizens, under the First, Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments, to turn off our hearing aids when the Senator opens his mouth and, on those few occasions when he closes it, to look out at the heavens and rejoice at the momentary composure of the universe.